



Original Article

Psychological Problems Faced by Nonnatives English Learners: A Perspective of Secondary Level English Learners in D. G. Khan

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the problems behind the psychological weaknesses of speaking among some non-native English language learners. The speaking skill was an unused part of a rather silent, nonparticipating classroom practices in the past in educational processes. The nonnative learners of English as a result, have hardly paid any attention to it in foreign language learning practices in a formal education. This has been documented as a developing problem in the practices of the learners in Pakistan at present. The research design was descriptive, based on survey design. The participants of this study were 400 boys and girls at secondary school level studying in Dera Ghazi Khan (D G Khan). The data were collected through a self-developed research questionnaire at five-point Likert scale by applying random sampling technique. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used for data analysis. The study results show that many learners faced psychological problems at high level in speaking English. Therefore, it is recommended that the teachers should promote English speaking through the usage of direct method.

Keywords: English language, nonnative learners, psychological problems, speaking problems

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the crucial processes that the learners use to communicate with each other. Scarcity of speaking phenomenon seems to be the status quo of English skills in Pakistan. It is reportedly true that humans can express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings in and through language. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) in non-English contexts have been termed as both difficult and expensive languages to learn in general. This foreign language utilization is slipped into some reasonable facts of lack of decipherability in such nonnative and non-English contexts (Al-Sibai, 2004). On the contrary, it is considered as the primary source of knowledge and communication at international level. The students are attracted to study and learn the mastery of English speaking in many countries. Those who want to go abroad for study purposes need to understand and speak the language to survive in English contexts. They learn the English language for almost 16 years from lower level to high level in Pakistan for global advancement and educational furtherance.

It is the requirement of the day to speak English fluently (Rahman, 2012). Harmer (2001) has viewed three basic reasons for the learners' to step away from their daily routine to learn English. The first is the opportunity offered to them to practice the language through discussions beyond the classrooms, which may help them to add emotions to the learning of language. The second task is used to establish feedback for speaking to the second language learners. Third, the task is the concern of the students' motivation for speaking. English speaking is not celebrated, as it has historically been a skill outside language testing in many institutions of learning in Pakistan. This phenomenon is rather grave at secondary level of education in the country in general and D G Khan in particular. Therefore, this investigation is aimed to highlight D G Khan's young nonnative English language learners' psychological problems.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To find out the psychological problems faced by the nonnative English language learners while speaking English at secondary school level in D G Khan
- To find out the significance of gender upon their psychological problems in the skill at the secondary school level in D G Khan

Research Questions

- What are the psychological problems faced by the nonnative English language learners while speaking English at secondary school level in D G Khan?
- Is there any significance of gender upon the psychological problems in the skill at the secondary school level in D G Khan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

English speaking is a privilege in the world (Rahman, 2012). In everyday life, speaking is an important

form of communication in school and college English programs. The need of English is increasing day by day and speaking skill for communication is considered very crucial. Both listening and speaking are perceived fundamental for English conversation (Coombe, 2017). Language is tutored to expand students' achievement for a specific objective in everyday living. Spoken language used in conversation is crucial for listening and explaining daily situations. Its strength is the students as the users who recognize words, phrases, sounds, and types of discourse that illustrate a language. Human beings adopt complex processes of communication within the purpose of information transfer and at the same time, the speakers have to follow a certain process of communication to reach a meaning construct. A speaker uses well thought and defined words to carry the meaning across (Nassiri & Gulakjani, 2016).

Socially, appropriate words, a fair degree of fluency, syntactic awareness, and better capabilities of language use in different contexts are a requisite for a conversational event (Kayi, 2006). Speaking elevates the psychological elements and the speaker's comfort level is hoisted and strengthened with frequent language use. Horwitz et al., (1986) argues, "Psychological factors contribute at least as much and often more than the linguistic aspects to language learning" (p.127). This means that the psychological aspect is connected to the output process in communication. The students with a high or strong affective filters will not be receptive to the linguistic input and will have difficulty processing it. Good fluency is the ability to speak appropriately for the situation and the state of the speaker and listener. There are several factors of good speaking to be considered communicative, fluent, and accurate. Speaking is an interactive meaning-making process that involves generating, receiving, and processing information (Segalowitz, 2010).

Heriansyah (2016) states that some psychological problems of the learners in English speaking are lack of confidence, shyness, and fear of slips and errors. The students need to have words and understand their functions in interactive communication. In other words, the ability to master words or the ability to know them is one of the keys to speaking success (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Psychologically, immature individuals hardly perform well in speaking, as they stand weak in both grammar and comprehension. Other problems are lack of speaking practice, confidence, shyness, motivation, mother tongue interference, and limited time to prepare for English tests (Adijah, 2014). In addition, Richard (2008) reports that becoming proficient is very difficult in a foreign language when the learner is trying to comprehend the nature of its content. Speaking ability is an important aspect and a useful skill in English language learning. It is part of the learning objectives or skills. In the learning process, it is the most effective way to qualify the speaker's thoughts and ideas, and how to express them.

More to the point, according to Kumaravadivelu (2006), learning difficulties are related to the learner's internal and external factors, including age and anxiety, bargaining as interaction and interpretation, tactical elements such as learning and communication strategies, affective factors like attitudes and motives, knowledge elements like linguistic and metalinguistic skills, and environmental factors such as educational and social perspectives. Language learners have a definite need for knowledge in three areas concerned with speaking (Ziash, 2013). The mechanics, functions, and socio-cultural norms. Vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax form the mechanics (Burnkart, 1998). Syntax is generally considered to be a set of rules specifying the correct order of words at the sentence level, whereas vocabulary is the power of communication (Nunan, 2003). Students are required to produce a correct, socially appropriate utterance in communication. This is consistent with an explanation as the learners' ability to manipulate structures and the difference between grammatically appropriate and inappropriate ones. In other words, grammatical integration is used to teach the correct way to master the language in spoken and written forms. Moreover, the information's usability helps deliver some sense and is used in verbal exchanges. The reason behind speaking under the circumstances is a reference to the socio-cultural manifestation of spoken language (Burnkart, 1998; Natalia, 2015; Nurhadiah, 2020).

There are various difficulties in linguistic acquisition or language learning. Syntactic disorder, poor pronunciation, and limited vocabulary may prevent the speakers from the oral practice. The learners' tendency towards the mother tongue for oral communication, as a result, may adversely affect the learning language skill. It is reported that they face difficulties when they lack the required linguistic knowledge (Hosni, 2014). Psychological reactions may be witnessed if the learners start speaking (Lin, 2013). The spoken ability displays personality, knowledge, and real time situational expression (Luoma, 2004).

Psychological Factors

Juhana (2012) views the following psychological factors (Table 1) that the learners face while speaking the language in the classroom:

Table 1

Psychological Factors

Variable	Speaking Problems
Psychological problem	Nervousness
	Self-confidence
	Shyness
	Hesitation
	Anxiety
	Lack of motivation

- Nervousness prevails as a psychological problem, among the students who do not have command over English speaking
- Self-confidence is high when the learners have a good capability of English speaking. It provides the learners with motivation and power to take an effective view of their own learning. The main reason that lowers students’ self-confidence is their low perceived ability of English speaking
- Shyness is another psychological problem faced by new learners
- Hesitation is one of the common problems the students face in English speaking
- Anxiety of speaking is a type of disorder that erupts in the learner’s mind
- Motivation is the strength of the students for an achievement. They feel less motivated by the classroom teacher if they cannot speak.
- Speaking fluency may remove their psychological problems (Nunan, 2003)

Conceptual Framework

This research is focused on the psychological problems of English language learners’ speaking skill. Developing with a conceptual framework, the researcher has analyzed the students’ psychological problems with speaking through a questionnaire. The researcher’s findings of their psychological problems in the language productive skill is organized because of the conceptual framework performance for the analysis (Figure 1).

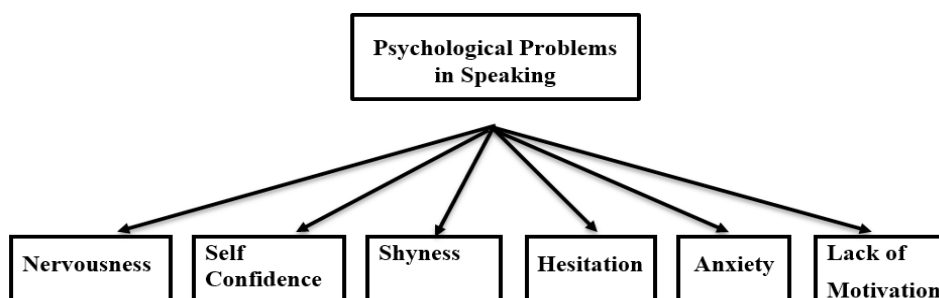


Figure. 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The research design was descriptive in nature, based on a survey. The nature of the study was a quantitative investigation into the problems faced by the secondary level nonnative students of English.

Targeted Population

The study’s targeted population was students of English language learners at secondary school level in D G Khan. A random sample consisted of 400 English language learners at secondary school level in the district and two stages for data collection were utilized (Table 2).

Table 2

Selected secondary schools and sample of students for study sample

District	Selected Schools			Selected Students		
D G Khan	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
	5	5	10	200	200	400

Instrument of the study

The instrument used in the study was self-developed, using five points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree to measure the students’ psychological problems faced in speaking English. The questionnaire’s first part had demographical and personal information and its second included statements of English-speaking problems of twelve items. The researcher collected the data through a questionnaire about English speaking problems from English language learners at the school level in the district of southern western Punjab of Pakistan. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to derive the results. Frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used for descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test for inferential statistics. The responses of students were analyzed in percentage, represented in graphic form to measure the responses of the target population. The researcher applied the mean score which provided information about the responses on each item. The researcher then tabulated the data and interpreted the tables. The responses of the students were analyzed represented in mean score and standard deviation to measure the response of the population.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 3 shows that high level mean values refer to the nonnative English learners’ perceived psychological problems. The high-perceived psychological problems were accent problems, family language interference, anxiety, hesitation, pressure of English speaking, nervousness, shyness, lack of effort, confusion, expression problem, less confidence, and lack of motivation.

Table 3

Psychological problems faced by the learners for English speaking

Variable	Statements	Mean	Std.
Psychological Problems	I face accent problem in speaking English.	3.4	1.32
	I encounter the usage of local language during English speaking.	3.26	1.275
	I come across the anxiety problem when I am speaking English.	3.27	1.29
	I feel hesitation due to the fear of incorrect English speaking.	3.49	1.293
	I fail to recall the concepts due to pressure of speaking English.	3.37	1.349
	I become nervous while speaking in English before fellows.	3.28	1.21
	I am shy to speak English in classroom.	3.16	1.262
	I don't put in effort to speak English.	3.43	1.317
	I get confused while speaking in English	3.18	1.01
	I face expression problem during English speaking	3.41	1.321
	I have less confidence for English speaking.	3.12	1.262
	I have less motivation for speaking English	2.97	1.45

The outcome of t-Test values (Table 4) shows that there was a significance difference between the boys and girls regarding psychological problems of English speaking as significance value is $.017 < .05$.

Table 4

t- Test for psychological problems

Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error mean	F	Sig.
Boy	200	32.876	6.417	.4524	5.549	.017
Girl	200	31.927	7.669	.5414		

Significance Level = .05

Discussion

As the study was aimed to investigate the psychological problems of the nonnative, D G Khan learners, the first challenge that the researcher could materialize was their inhibition of talking in the learning language. Psychologically, they were not prepared to communicate in English. The most obvious reasons were unsupportive accentuation, lack of confidence, increasing anxiety, local language involvement, hesitation, fear of incorrect speaking, social pressure feeling, nervousness, less effort, shyness, motivation, and expression problems. Heriansyah (2016) had explored similar results. The learners hardly made psychological improvement to overcome shyness, nervousness and other problems to communicate in a second language. Moreover, the environment becomes less creative to establish the psychological factors for English speakers

when the learners' interest is not vivid. Therefore, speaking remains the neglected area among such learners in the historical context of the language use in the region. This influence was supported by research of Leong and Ahmadi (2016), who stated that motivation can influence components of language learning. Nakhlah (2016) also found that students who share the same mother tongue tend to use their language because they understand each other and feel less nervous while speaking English. The indicative of low level of concentration demotivates the learners due to negative emotions for speaking. The psychological problems were nervousness, shyness, lack of effort to speak English, and hesitation due to the fear of incorrect English speaking.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study helps identify the students' feelings of anxiety for English speaking as the main reason because of the fear that they may make mistakes while speaking. It is important to suggest here that the students have a low level of motivation and less practice for speaking in classroom in conditions of silence, authority, and use of local language other than the target language. In fact, if the students have a hostile attitude towards the language, they may not have a significant development in the acquisition of language skills including speaking. There are some recommendations based on the research findings. The teachers should alleviate psychological aspects for English speaking in the early moments of interaction. Students should increase the practice of English speaking for better communication. Teachers must encourage the students to get motivated and use the language. Since this study was conducted at secondary school level, it is recommended to further the study's investigation to higher education.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared no competing interest.

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